



*Satpal Singh Sidhu*  
*Whatcom County Executive*



January 21, 2021

RE: Emergency Winter Shelters

Dear concerned community members,

I appreciate you sharing your concerns and empathy for the people staying at City Hall. I too am concerned about their welfare and well-being.

First, I want to dispel the misconception that there are no emergency winter shelters.

The [County has worked closely with the City of Bellingham](#), as well as Lighthouse Mission Ministries and HomesNOW!, to create additional shelter space this winter. During the past week, between [Base Camp](#) and the overflow shelter on Holly Street, 90-100 beds have been available each night. That number is sufficient to provide shelter to all the people camping at City Hall.

Lighthouse Mission Ministries staff have been very clear that [everyone is welcome at Base Camp, including those who have been restricted from entry in the past](#). All they have to do is adhere to [the code of conduct](#), which is both reasonable and necessary to keep everyone safe. No shelter can safely operate without a code of conduct.

Some forecasts show that the weather may be colder in the coming weeks. I strongly encourage everyone sleeping in tents at City Hall to make use of the shelter available at Base Camp, where they provide not only warm beds but also hot meals and access to services which could help them transition into a more permanent housing situation.

With regard to plans for Friday, January 22, I understand that the City's Public Works crews aim to create a 25-foot fire protection area around City Hall and have been speaking with campers and volunteers about this. This fire protection area is being created per the City's Fire Marshal, similar to the fire protection area created around the Central Library building in December.

I hope you will join me in urging the protest organizers to start working today to get the campers to our existing shelters before the weather worsens and before the City of Bellingham begins taking steps to end the encampment.

Sincerely,

Satpal Sidhu  
Whatcom County Executive